

VZCZCXRO3571
PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHKU #1684 1330631
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 130631Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4414
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS KUWAIT 001684

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, G/TIP, AND INL/HSTC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB PHUM KU TIP](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO
PREVENT ABUSIVE LABOR SITUATIONS

¶1. (U) During a May 8 speech at the opening of a conference entitled, "Kuwait: A Financial and Commercial Center," the Ambassador praised recent Kuwaiti signature of UN labor protocols to protect against trafficking, but emphasized that more still needed to be done in Kuwait to protect basic worker rights. In particular, the Ambassador stressed, "All workers, both Kuwaiti and expatriate, both in the formal sectors of the economy and in households, need to be treated with fairness....I am not talking about special rights. I am referring to basic rights: to be paid an agreed wage on time, to control one's own passport, to have some means of effective recourse in disputes, and to have shelter available when needed." "No matter how prosperous a society becomes, it will not be a successful society without recognizing the essential dignity of labor," he concluded. The Ambassador's remarks received front-page coverage in many Arabic-language dailies on May 9.

¶2. (SBU) Commenting on the speech during a May 9 meeting with the Ambassador, Ahmadi Governor Shaykh Ibrahim Al-Duaij Al-Sabah agreed that the treatment of foreign laborers in Kuwait remained a concern. "We care (about this problem) and would like to get rid of it," he stressed. The Governor emphasized, however, that the companies that recruited foreign laborers and brought them to Kuwait were largely responsible for the abuses. He believed the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs (MOSAL) in cooperation with source countries needed to more thoroughly vet labor recruitment agencies and ensure expatriate laborers received what they were promised. Shaykh Ibrahim suggested source countries require recruitment agencies to pay a deposit equal to six months of the laborer's promised salary to guarantee payment and prevent abuse. The Ambassador noted that Kuwait's "corrupt" work visa sponsorship system contributed to the problem. Shaykh Ibrahim reiterated his opinion that the recruitment agencies and MOSAL's poor enforcement of existing regulations were the primary causes of Kuwait's labor problems.

For more reporting from Embassy Kuwait, visit:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/?cable s>

Visit Kuwait's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/kuwait/>

LEBARON